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ABSTRACT

The Blondin family undertook a 9-month educational journey across the United States that revolved around a unique learning experience incorporating current technology. The family's three children were enrolled in Northwest Academy in northern Michigan, a science- and technology-based public academy for grades 6 through 12 that supported their plan to use e-mail and create a family Web site on the Internet as they traveled. Equipped with a laptop computer and a digital camera on loan from Northwest Academy and a desktop computer installed in their motor home, the Blondins began their technology-based travel school. The Web site was designed so students anywhere could tune in, share, and learn through their experiences and interact with the family. The family traveled more than 25,000 miles and visited 40 states. Reading, computer time, Web site building, e-mail, schoolwork, saxophone playing, and major discussions filled the travel hours. Using the Internet to communicate and build a Web site resulted in opportunities to meet interesting people. The Blondins became very creative in finding a phone jack for accessing the Internet with their laptop computer. These interactions and the educational nature of the project led to many discussions on education, technology, and where it is all headed. A list of places visited during the trip and commonly asked questions about the trip are appended. (LPP)

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People Make Dreams Come True, and Technology Expands the Possibilities:

An Educational Journey across the United States

Mark, Betsy, Donald, Kelly, & Stacy Blondin ■

Abstract

A 9-month educational journey of the United States undertaken by the Blondin family revolved around a unique learning experience that incorporated current technology. Their three children were enrolled in Northwest Academy in northern Michigan, a science- and technology-based public academy for grades 6 through 12 that supported their plan to use e-mail and create a family Web site on the Internet as they traveled. Equipped with a laptop computer and a digital camera on loan from Northwest Academy and a desktop computer installed in their motor home, the Blondins began their technology-based travel school. The Web site was designed so students anywhere could tune in, share, and learn through their experiences and interact with the family. The family traveled more than 25,000 miles and visited 40 states. Reading, computer time, Web site building, e-mail, schoolwork, saxophone playing, and major discussions filled the travel hours. Using the Internet to communicate and build a Web site resulted in opportunities to meet interesting people. The Blondins became very creative in finding a phone jack for accessing the Internet with their laptop computer. These interactions and the educational nature of the project led to many discussions on education, technology, and where it is all headed. Reflecting on their journey, the family expressed their joy of learning and experiencing so much of the country together, noting that a few short years ago the project would not have been possible. They also noted that the possibilities for the future of technology in education and the role of families therein are infinite.

■

A Typical Day

No two days are the same. Some days we are traveling, and many days we are out exploring. We visit museums and historical places. We explore the great outdoors and study plants and animals. For example, today we woke up about 8 o'clock. Donald, Kelly, and I went for an early morning swim. We swam for about 2 hours. For lunch, we ate soup and sandwiches. We went into Tucson to the visitors' center and gathered up a bunch of information on Tucson. Next, we went to see about being extras in Kevin Costner's movie, The Postman. *Afterward, we went back to the motor home. Kelly, Donald, and I did about 4 hours of schoolwork. Kelly and I did math, Spanish, language arts, and read some of* A Wrinkle in Time. *Kelly and I took our golden retriever, Buddy, for a walk. We saw some jackrabbits and two roadrunners. For dinner, we ate scrambled eggs and toast. This lifestyle would certainly not be for a person who likes a routine.* (Stacy Blondin, January 31, 1997)

Took my first shower in the motor home this morning. I think we should search for places to stay that have showers. The water barely comes out of our shower, and you have to continuously turn it on and off to conserve water. Our parking place here is great. It overlooks Coe Lake in Berea. There is a gazebo, a path through the woods, and a swimming pool near us. Buddy seems to be doing all right; maybe it is possible for him to go with us on our trip, after all. Today we're going to University Circle where there is a museum, a library, and an art institute. (Donald Blondin, Cleveland, October 6, 1996)

Today we got up, got all ready, and left for Plimouth Plantation. It was neat. The people

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dressed up and talked like they did back then. It was cool. You could go in and see what the houses used to look like. We saw a blacksmith making hooks and people putting straw roofs on houses. We talked to one lady, and she didn't know what a restroom was. She thought it was a room where you rest. Later we went to the Plymouth Rock. It was no bigger than a couple of bean bag chairs. Then we went back to our campsite and took Buddy for a walk. (Kelly Blondin, October 24,1996)

Getting Ready

Who has never dreamed of an extended journey with family, friends, or someone they love? Stepping out of the routine, taking off for a month or two, or eight or nine, exploring a state or a country, hiking a major trail, canoeing or sailing a waterway—these kinds of dreams must occur to most people at some time in their lives. But layers of "can'ts" and "why nots" prevent us from making them come true.

Sometimes, when the desire is great and the circumstances are right, reality comes out of such a dream. That's how it was for us, the Blondin family. We are Mark and Betsy (both 43 and married 18 years), Donald (15-years-old), Kelly and Stacy (12-years-old), and Buddy, the golden retriever (2-years-old).

The foregoing quotes are excerpts from daily journals kept during our family's 9-month trip around the United States that began in September 1996. It could be described as one of the longest field trips ever, school on the road, or as we affectionately labeled it, "our odyssey-educational adventure-vacation-journey thing."

Our multisensory learning experience took place in 40 states, big cities, small towns, and national and state parks. Museums, aquariums, science centers, and observatories became our classrooms. Navigating and living on the road provided intrinsic practical learning opportunities.

Timely circumstances and life-altering events made our adventure possible. What made it different from other extended explorations of our country is technology. We incorporated use of the Internet, a family Web site, e-mail, and computer software resources in our journey. That utilization of current technology not only enhanced our experiences, it also helped our children attend school in northern Michigan while we traveled.

After experiencing some disappointments in our local school district's academic standards, we had enrolled our children in Northwest Academy for 1996-97. It is a charter school for grades 6–12 with an emphasis on science and technology located in a town neighboring ours. The school was beginning its first year of operation.

By August 1996, after we decided to make the trip, we began to consider home-school options and to explore curriculums. We started searching the Internet and talking to people we knew who were home schooling their children.

A turn of events occurred when Mark and Donald attended an orientation meeting at Northwest Academy and explained to school staff that the Blondin children might not attend school there because of our planned educational adventure. An enthused discussion followed that included innovative ideas about the educational and technological possibilities our trip presented.

Our journey provided an opportunity that was mutually beneficial to the school and us. We took the curriculum and textbooks for sixth and ninth grades, and our children did their traditional schoolwork along with their nontraditional learning experiences. We tailored subjects like science, social studies, and history to fit our location and activities.

As part of our unique relationship, the school loaned us a laptop computer and a digital camera so we could communicate with and build a Web site for students and staff at school to access and use as a learning tool.

The Role of Technology

On September 30, 1996, armed with the laptop computer, the digital camera, and our desktop computer installed in a 34-foot motor home, we left home in Boyne City, Michigan, for our trip around the United States. We left Flint 4 days later after visiting family and saying long good-byes.

Today I guess you could say we started our journey across America! We left about 3 p.m., and 5 miles down the road the motor home completely shut down. We pulled over and tried restarting the engine a few times. When that didn't work, we called a mechanic. He came about 2 hours later. A loose fuel line; that's what was wrong with it. So, at about 7 p.m., we finally got going. We stopped at a gas station to fill up the gas tank. As my dad got out, he said, "Well guys, the saga continues." We had a flat tire on

the tow dolly. So we got it fixed at the gas station across the street. As we tried to drive the van onto the tow dolly, the van wouldn't start. Then when it did and we pulled it onto the tow dolly, we bent part of the bumper off. We fixed that and were finally on our way to Cleveland, Ohio. (Stacy, October 4, 1996)

Deciding what to take and pack for the adventure was challenging, and though we knew what technology we would use, it took more thought to decide what standard equipment and materials we would include. A dictionary, thesaurus, atlases, calendars, English grammar and science reference books, novels and nonfiction books, and audiocassettes and CDs were packed in motor home corners to supplement computer resources. Also included in our arsenal were a video camera and a 35mm camera.

We considered using computer software exclusively and leaving hard-copy books at home to save space. Not always having electricity or wanting to rely on the generator for computer use, though, we were happy to have the dictionary, road atlas, and old geography book with us.

Technology enhanced our adventure in terms of Internet access, extensive e-mail use, building a family Web site, software research capabilities, and by helping to obtain admission to many places we wanted to visit along the way.

Our Web site documented the places we went and what we learned. Developing the site provided a constant direction and helped us maintain a focus for our adventure. We hoped that students at Northwest Academy and at schools around the world would access our site, read about our activities, and access Web sites of educational places to which we provided links.

After a couple of months of learning, Donald and Mark took over the construction of our Web site, which was started by Shawn and Donna Powers of PowerNet in Indian River, Michigan, prior to the start of our trip. North Central Michigan College donated space for the site, and North Central's media center staff, particularly Eric Grandstaff (who was instrumental in establishing northern Michigan's early Internet connections), was extremely helpful in getting us started. PowerNet's and North Central Michigan College's help with our Web site is a commendable example of the way communities can work together to provide educational opportunities through technology.

Indeed, students at Northwest Academy and students in Boyne City did access our Web site, follow our adventure, and send us feedback. When a student visits our Web site, he or she can link to and explore places like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Aquarium of the Americas, Plimouth Plantation, the John F. Kennedy Library, or the Portland Museum of Art.

Another positive outcome of using the Internet and building the Web site was our ability to exchange admission to some of the museums, attractions, and events we wanted to attend for mentioning the organizations on our Web site and providing a link to theirs. This exchange enabled us to see and do things we could not have otherwise afforded. When you consider admission fees to many museums, aquariums, and parks for five people traveling the country for 9 months, the total is astronomical. We simply could not have had many of the educational experiences without this advantage.

Just a few places that provided us complimentary admission because of our educational project and the Web site were the Great Lakes Science Center, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the Museum of the Rockies, Seven Seas Whale Watching Line, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, and the Oregon Coast Aquarium.

In numerous ways, e-mail was an invaluable aspect of Internet access during our adventure. First, it allowed us to keep in contact with family, friends, and school as we traveled. That contact helped us feel much less lonesome, and our children could keep up with news from friends and teachers. Also, we could send and receive messages from a family member who was collecting our "snail mail" and be informed of any urgent correspondence.

Second, e-mail provided a method of finding things we needed along the way. A prime example is the way we found a home for Buddy near Seattle while we went to Hawaii. It's not an easy task to find someone to adopt your family dog for a month, but we did it by using the Internet and e-mail. Through a golden retriever mailing list, we contacted a golden retriever lover and breeder in Morton, Washington, who knew of a young man near Seattle raising his own golden retriever puppy for a 4H project. He was willing to care for Buddy to earn money for his puppy-related expenses, and the

family had room in their yard for our motor home, also! Things could not have worked out better for Buddy or us.

We received meaningful messages from other golden retriever owners as well. As a result of the list and e-mail, we were able to later stop in Chateau, Montana, to meet a golden retriever owner who had 7 adult goldens and 10 puppies! That was a treat for the whole family.

Another surprising advantage of e-mail was receiving messages of encouragement and moral support for our odyssey. There were times we had doubts or became discouraged by tedious travel chores. Just about then we would receive e-mail from someone who admired what we were trying to do, someone who had done something similar for their children, or someone who wished they had. When such communication occurred, it recharged our weakened batteries to full power.

Whenever we needed to send or receive e-mail messages or add to the Web site, we had to find an available phone line. This led to asking people in all types of businesses, from computer stores to Laundromats, if we could temporarily connect the laptop to their phone line.

> *Dear Journal: We got to Portland and started looking for a place to park. We were also looking for a place to get on the Internet. We found a place to park at a police station. It was very windy out. Well, after we got settled in, we went to the YMCA looking to get on the Internet, but for some reason, it wouldn't work. For dinner, we had lobster. It was good tasting, but disgusting looking. . . .* (Kelly Blondin, October 14, 1996)

> *Dear Journal: Today was not my favorite day, but it was okay. We spent half the day looking for a place to check our e-mail and were successful. Then we went to the Portland Museum of Art where we saw some neat artwork by Winslow Homer, Andrew Wyeth, etc. Later that night we went swimming while Dad and Donald went to Maine Internet Connections. Kelly and I had lots of fun playing at the pool. We slept once again at the college police parking lot.* (Stacy, October 15, 1996)

As we searched for phone access, we met many fascinating people and enjoyed conversations about their lives, their homes, our adventure, and technology and education in general. This experience turned out to be a challenging and fun aspect of our trip.

Lastly, the Internet, in addition to the computer software we had, allowed us to research places we were going to explore and topics Donald, Kelly, and Stacy needed for schoolwork.

We accessed the Internet, for example, to find information on the planets when Kelly and Stacy worked on a report for math. They used Encarta software for additional information, and Microsoft donated programs we used extensively. World Atlas and Maps and Streets Plus were utilized by all of us along with our hard-copy atlases and maps.

Kodak gave our school a discount on the purchase of the digital camera and also sent us some sample transparency film, photographic paper, and inkjet snapshot paper. The digital camera was an indispensable tool for construction of our Web site. As much as we used the digital camera, we also used our video and 35mm cameras.

A good example of our use of traditional technology is the videotape we made at Big Bend National Park. Big Bend is snuggled into a corner of southwest Texas, and there is more access to nature than modern technology there. Only people with satellite dishes were receiving information during our weeklong stay. Because of snow in the park, even mail delivery was interrupted. Although we enjoyed our quiet, outdoor time at Big Bend, using the laptop to receive e-mail and news and weather information did help us feel somewhat connected to the rest of the world.

The video camera provided a means for us to make a tape for the students at Northwest Academy about the geology, plants, and animals in the river, mountain, and desert environments of Big Bend.

This wondrous national park was unanimously one of our favorite places, and our total experience there illustrates the multisensory learning opportunities our trip provided. The knowledge we acquired at Big Bend helped us understand many places we explored later.

> *Dear Journal: Today we got up, and it was my day to decide what to do. Well, I decided to hike the Lost Mine Trail. The trail was up in the Chisos Mountains, so we arrived there about 11:00. We arrived at the top of the trail about 1:30. We spent about 40 minutes at the top. The trail was supposedly 5-1/2 miles, but straight uphill. We made it back down in about 45 minutes. When we got back, we did some laundry. For dinner, we had barbecue chicken in tortilla shells. There was*

still snow on the Chisos. There is a legend that there is gold in the mountain. (Kelly, January 9, 1997)

Learning Experiences

In many ways, our adventure successfully combined current technology, older technology, such as the video camera, and traditional resources, such as reference books, lectures, and hands-on activities.

The five of us spent much of our learning time together. Many of our multisensory learning experiences took place at big name attractions and popular places, but others occurred spontaneously and naturally along the way. Out of countless examples, one is a stop we made at a rest area to take a break and change the oil in the motor home. The rest area was also a wildlife preserve, complete with signs and explanations about the marshy environment and its birds and animals.

...we drove back to the motor home for last-minute boat supplies, and then we were off to the whale-watching boat. There we boarded right away and set off at one o'clock. The boat drove 17 miles east to a large bay, which I have forgotten the name of. We saw almost 40 whales. It was spectacular!!! There were humpbacks, fin whales, and minke whales. They were feeding, and we saw a couple with their mouths open. They were awesome! None of us got seasick, which was good. We spent an hour and a half watching all the whales play and eat. During the boat ride, we talked to a biologist named Michelle who worked as a guide and researcher on the boat. She was nice and thought our trip was really neat. Most people think that way, and it is encouraging. We ate another dinner at the motor home and then went to the Hard Disk Café where we saw our Web page. It's coming along great! We do so much during the days, I'm plum tuckered out. (Donald, Gloucester, October 17, 1996)

Today at 8:30 we went aboard and toured a schooner called the Adventure. *The ship was first used for fishing in 1927, and in 1954 it was converted to a windjammer and began giving sailing trips that would head out to the ocean for a week at a time. The boat is now a historic landmark. The tour gave you a good idea about what life was like during the major fishing days in the 20's and 30's. It was not a job I would have chosen! After settling in [our campsite], we drove around the island seeing Halibut State Park and the "paper house." The house was awesome—completely made of paper except the floor, roof, and chimney. Even furniture was made of tightly rolled and varnished newspapers. The desk had articles about Lindbergh crossing the Atlantic. The home was built by Elias Stenman, whose hobby was building using paper (obviously). He started building in 1920 and actually lived in the home for 5 years. He began by insulating the home with newspaper. When the paper did well through the winter, he decided to go crazy and build everything using newspaper!* (Donald, October 18, 1996)

Several places we visited were natural learning classrooms. Snorkeling in Hawaii allowed us to swim with dolphins and sea turtles and identify tropical fish, marine animals, and many kinds of coral. Exploring tide pools and rocky shoreline areas on the East Coast led to detailed discussions of the moon, tides, and succession. Later, at McDonald Observatory in Texas, we learned again about the role of the moon in Earth's tidal activity. Stacy and Kelly put together an amazing shell collection in Florida, and while in Sarasota, we visited Mote Marine where we easily related to the exhibits. At Big Bend National Park, we joined a ranger-led driving tour of the park that highlighted the area's geology, plant, and animal life. There we were able to see the obvious results of plate tectonics, volcanic activity, and the effects of erosion.

The variety of cultures, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic divisions in our country was ever present in our explorations. In large cities, we were constantly reminded of the diversity that makes this country great. At the Texas Institute of Cultures in San Antonio, the theme of the introductory film and exhibits was how different groups of people played important roles in the development of Texas and, in turn, our country.

After having been to Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty in New York, we observed immigration issues currently causing rifts in communities of the Southwest and Southern California with greater insight. This understanding enhanced our discussions with family and friends in the Southwest about immigration and cultural diversity.

Sometimes, particular locations would illustrate the stark contrast between the "haves" and "have-nots" in the United States. One day we left Monterey, California, for a drive to Pebble Beach and a famous 17-mile stretch of coastal road. Shortly after observing street people panhandle in Monterey, we

saw multi-million-dollar homes with views worth even more perched above the coast.

A particular 24-hour period will forever remind us of the variety of learning opportunities available in this country. One day we visited the McDonald Observatory outside Fort Davis, Texas, and were given a red-carpet tour by wonderful staff people. That night we attended a star party and marveled at celestial wonders high above Earth. The next day we visited Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico and went far below Earth's surface to explore the geological magic.

Shortly after that experience, we visited Los Alamos, New Mexico, and the Bradbury Museum. Our experience was special in that we spent the morning with a research scientist discussing nuclear power, DNA testing, and a variety of subjects. We conducted an experiment with DNA that showed how it is used in crime investigations. It was a one-on-one experience that gave science a fascinating and friendly face.

Our trip was full of daily observations and natural, spontaneous education. During our 2-week stay in Washington, DC, we had a nightly commute back to our campsite. We stopped each night at a local 7-11 store to get an Internet connection and soon developed a game. Questions would be asked about the places we visited that day, and correct answers were worth a slurpee. We were all winners, and it was amazing to see how much knowledge everyone absorbed.

We were in our nation's capital for the Veteran's Day celebration. On November 10, we visited the Vietnam Memorial and then took part in the Veteran's Day ceremonies the next day at Arlington National Cemetery. After the President's speech, we walked to President Kennedy's gravesite and then through the massive cemetery. A week later we toured the Holocaust Museum. While visiting Washington, we had rich discussions about our nation's history, sacrifices made for freedom, and the injustices man inflicts on his fellow man.

> *Today we went to the Bureau of Printing and Engraving. We saw how money is made. I got a key chain with shredded money in it—$50. After this, we went to the Holocaust Museum. We learned about Hitler and about the concentration camps. We also learned about what they did to people who they thought weren't perfect.* (Kelly, November 18, 1996)

Practical matters like map reading, trip planning, and obtaining fuel, water, power, and food became daily concerns. Negotiating skills and compromise were integral parts of our lives when we made decisions about what to do and where to go. Long-range planning involved complex equations of miles, fuel, possible destinations, and everyone's interests. We all became adept at everyday decision making.

Computer Use on the Road

In terms of using computers and the Internet on the road, we felt like pioneers, entering and exploring new territory. Progress in technology is at various stages and differs as much from location to location as people do. We often experienced difficulty in finding places where we could hop on the information highway. A librarian at the University of Maine in Portland said, "Maybe the country is not as wired as we think it is." He was right. At home in northern Michigan, local progress and easy access had spoiled us.

In Scarborough, Maine, we found a public library very well equipped and online, but in New Orleans, the public library had not yet begun the process. Minuteman Science and Technology High School in Lexington, Massachusetts, had just built a tremendous computer lab, was in the advanced stages of being wired, and at the time we visited was preparing to participate in a nationwide Internet Day.

We found only one public modem access location easily, and that was a kiosk in the Honolulu Airport. There you could bring your laptop and connect as easily as using a phone booth. Several hotels have wonderful media rooms with modem access, computers and printers, and fax machines. We used one of those in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Some private RV parks advertise telephone service, and though we thought we would be able to access the Internet at these places, many of them offered phone access only for long-term guests. At three or four campgrounds, we had phone access, and it was a true luxury!

Internet cafes are sprinkled throughout the country—we visited three or four—but some did not have extra phone lines to access. We could work on the Web site and check e-mail through their computers, but they normally charge hourly fees. At two of these cafes, we were treated like royalty, given free online time and a lot of attention because of the interest in our project.

Multimedia stores such as Kinko's did not usually have phone lines available for the laptop, and they charge an hourly fee to use their computers. At the time we stopped in one of these types of stores, they were just installing extra phone lines for modem access purposes.

Lessons Learned

As we traveled and conversed with people, we kept hearing that, in general, students and school staff did not seem to have enough training, access to, or time on computers to browse Web sites such as ours and take advantage of what is offered on the Internet.

From our own school, we heard that computer time was being limited because students were misusing computer access, and sufficient supervision was not feasible. We have heard this story countless times; it is a sad situation, but one that can be improved. A unique and wonderful educational resource is not being utilized to its potential.

Some school districts have hired full-time employees to facilitate computer and Internet use, supervise labs, and help staff find efficient ways to use the Internet with their students. Incorporating computer and Internet use in classrooms is a challenge, but it is one we can help each other tackle.

As we traveled, talked and learned, and tried to use all the resources possible during our adventure, we saw many ways in which technology could be used by families, by schools, and by communities in educational endeavors. Although much of what we did was experimental and some of our goals were not wholly realized, many of them were, and we feel the basic concept and ideas were sound.

We have already mentioned how schools, colleges, and businesses can be involved in a project such as ours, and how this kind of adventure could be shared with students all over the world. Educational institutions around the country can take advantage of current and near-future technology by:

- Sharing information more efficiently through mailing lists, Internet resources, and Web sites. Many schools are now online, and students and staff around the world can "compare notes" on countless subjects or conduct cultural exchanges.
- Taking advantage of anyone (student or staff) who travels by allowing students at the school to share his or her experiences through technology.
- Allowing students from all backgrounds and in all economic circumstances to share the wonders available on the Internet.

Technology can allow families to spend invaluable time together and strengthen their relationships by:

- Allowing them to take extended trips any time of year, during which children can continue their regular schoolwork and receive credit for nontraditional educational experiences.
- Allowing children to travel extensively with parents whose jobs require travel or can be done on the road.
- Being a way families can spend time together, using software or Internet sources to do research, word processing, and artwork, or visiting educational places via their Web sites.
- Providing opportunities for parents and community members to volunteer in school technology labs and work closely with students.

The first two points are already possible if parents choose to home school their children, but why not create situations wherein schools can also benefit? Schools could receive funding for those students, and everyone could benefit immensely from assignments shared by students at school and students on the road.

Our fundamental thinking about education would have to change substantially, along with traditional funding methods, attendance policies, and assessment procedures, but some changes are already taking place.

From the perspective of a family who traveled the country for 9 months with the support of a public school, the future holds infinite possibilities for families and education, with all that technology affords us. We need only to find the ways to open all the doors.

In many ways, our adventure was richer than we had anticipated and turned out better than expected. The school year we spent traveling as a family was more rewarding than imaginable. We spoke with people, in person or by e-mail, from everywhere, in various professions, of all ages and in all stages of life, who had made journeys like ours in their lives or who shared our dream of spending more time with their children. Many of

them said that if they had known it was possible, they would have done it.

The message we would like to share is that it can be done. We need to open our eyes and hearts, constantly question what we are doing and why, and use all tools and resources available to make the dreams we imagine come true.

APPENDIX A

Some of the Places We Visited

National Parks

Acadia
Big Bend
Yellowstone
Arches
Canyonlands
Olympic
Glacier
Grand Tetons
Saguaro
Grand Canyon
Badlands
Yosemite
Redwoods
Volcano
Rocky Mountain
Painted Desert and Petrified Forest
Carlsbad Caverns

Special Places

Niagara Falls
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
Great Lakes Science Center
Boston Freedom Trail
Plimouth Plantation
Ellis Island
Statue of Liberty
Brooklyn Bridge
Wall Street
Jamestown
St. Augustine, Florida
Botanical Gardens (Cleveland)
Schooner Adventure
United Nations
Walden Pond
Quincy Market
Faneuil Hall
Freedom Trail (Boston)
Empire State Building
Today Show taping

National Historical and Memorial Parks

Minute Man and Old North Bridge
Cape Cod National Shoreline
Independence (Philadelphia)
White Sands
Cabrillo National Monument
Mt. St. Helen
Mt. Rushmore
Harper's Ferry

Aquariums

Aquarium of the Americas
Mote Marine
Monterey Bay Aquarium
Oregon Coast Aquarium
Whale watching off the coast of Massachusetts

Museums

Cleveland Museum of Natural History
Portland Museum of Art
Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York City)
Natural History Museum (New York City)
The following Smithsonian Museums:
Air and Space, American History, Natural History, Postal, Renwick, and National Gallery of Art
Holocaust Museum
National Geographic
Ford's Theater
City of Mobile, Alabama
Fort Conde
Santa Fe Fine Arts, Wheelwright, American Indian

Observatories

Mauna Kea (Hawaii)
Kitt Peak
McDonald

Universities and Libraries

Bennington, Vermont
College of the Atlantic
University of Maine
John F. Kennedy
Harvard
Lyndon B. Johnson
University of Massachusetts
Berkeley

Washington, DC

Washington Monument

Lincoln Memorial
Vietnam Memorial
Korean War Memorial
U.S. Capitol Building
National Archives
Kennedy Center
White House
Union Station
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Cities

Cleveland, Ohio
Portland, Maine
Boston, Massachusetts
New York City, New York
Washington, DC
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
New Orleans, Louisiana
Sarasota, Florida
Houston, Texas
Austin, Texas
San Antonio, Texas
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Santa Fe, New Mexico
Phoenix, Arizona
Sedona, Arizona
Las Vegas, Nevada
San Diego, California
Los Angeles, California
San Francisco, California
Reno/Lake Tahoe, Nevada
Eugene, Oregon
Portland, Oregon
Honolulu, Hawaii
Kona and Hilo, Hawaii
Salt Lake City, Utah
Denver, Colorado
Madison, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis, Wisconsin
Chicago, Illinois
Charleston, South Carolina
Provincetown, Massachusetts

Fun Places

Busch Gardens
Six Flags, L.A.
Knott's Berry Farm

Zoos

National Zoo
Houston Zoo
San Diego Zoo

Cultural Entertainment

"The King and I"
"Cats"

APPENDIX B

Some Commonly Asked Questions about Our Adventure

How did you decide to make this trip?

Late in the winter of 1995-96, we saw or read something about extensive travel. Our son says it all began when we watched *Bridges of Madison County* and admired the photographer's lifestyle on the road, but our memories fail us on that point. We thought it would be great to travel the country and show our children the major sights and historical places. We have always believed that if you really want to do something, you find a way. We talked about it a lot and decided that we could do it. As a result of a career change for Mark, we were in the process of re-evaluating values, priorities, and career options. During this time, Mark's father died unexpectedly, and his death confirmed our feelings that nothing is forever and that very few of us get to spend enough time with our quickly growing children. Ours were at perfect ages to handle school on the road for a year and to remember the trip forever. The decision seemed right, and circumstances made the timing ideal. We were also trying to make decisions about school for our children that year, considering moving to a warmer climate, and thinking of returning to college ourselves, so the trip was also about looking for work or possible places to relocate.

How did you manage the expense?

This is an issue most people are curious about. We used our retirement-type savings to fund the adventure. It was and is one of the biggest risks for us, but we think the monetary consequences are worth the experience we had. We kept our house and rented it out for three of the months we were gone. Now we are totally starting over financially. Some aspects of the trip were less expensive than they could have been because we received support from some organizations and free admission to some places we visited.

How did you travel, and how did school on the road go?

We drove and lived in a 34-foot Coachmen class A motor home and towed our minivan. For our desktop computer, we installed a computer station in the motor home. Northwest Academy loaned us the laptop computer and a digital camera (for which Kodak gave a discount) so we could interact with students and teachers and send information and pictures to the Web site. Our children had textbooks and general outlines from school, and they did traditional work in math and language arts. Science, social studies, music, art, and physical wellness fell into place as intrinsic parts of our journey.

How did you all get along in a confined space for that period of time?

Great! We were not as confined as most people imagine. Although we were in the motor home a lot, we were also out of it a lot—sightseeing, exploring, hiking. A few more minor squabbles, along with getting on each other's nerves a little, occurred on the road than would have at home. It was stressful at times, just navigating and accomplishing daily chores, but we knew before we left that our family dynamics and personalities would weather a long adventure. ■